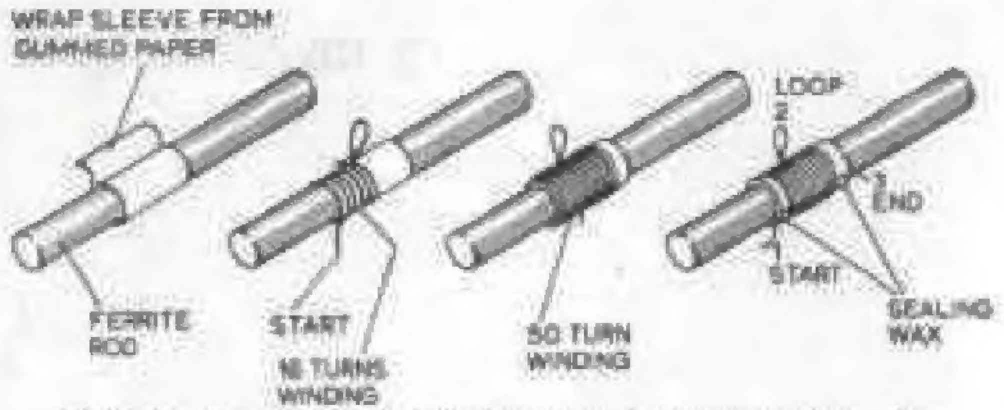

Fig. 3.1 Aerial tuning coil wound from 38-s.w.g. wire on a $\frac{3}{8}$-in. diameter ferrite rod.

Fig. 3.1 details the construction of a suitable coil for a tuned circuit, matched to a ferrite rod of $\frac{3}{8}$ in. diameter and about 4 in. long (see Chapter 4 for alternative coil windings on different rod sizes). If a rod is purchased longer than 4 in., it can be used as it is, or cut down by marking around with a file and then breaking off the surplus length.

Cut seven 1-in. lengths of gumstrip. Moisten one and wrap around the rod gummed side up. Now add about another half a dozen wrappings of similar length over the first, this time with gummed side *down* to form a reasonably rigid tube. Make sure that the paper tube is a *sliding* fit on the ferrite rod and leave to dry thoroughly (preferably removed from the rod so that it cannot become stuck to it).

When the paper tube is quite dry it should be rigid, when the coil windings can be applied. The wire to be used is 38-s.w.g. enamelled copper wire, the number 38 referring to the actual diameter of the wire according to the standard wire gauge (s.w.g.).*

Starting about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. in from one end of the paper tube, wind the wire carefully round the tube, with each turn tight against the one before it, until sixteen full turns have been completed. Then make a loop in the wire, as shown, and carry on winding, with succeeding turns touching, until fifty turns in all have been completed. The two loose ends of the coil (the start and finish) can be secured with a dab of sealing wax whilst the projecting loop can be twisted together (e.g. by putting a pencil through the loop and twisting up). Cut off the loop, leaving about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. protruding from the main coil, bare the wire ends and solder together. This forms point 2 on the coil; the start is point 1, and the end point 3–see Fig. 3.1. It will be easy to remember these

* American wire gauge (AWG) is about two sizes smaller than the British standard wire gauge (s.w.g.). For example, 38 s.w.g. is approximately the same as 36 AWG.

without marking since the loop or tapping point (2) comes much closer one end (1) than the other (3).

Cut a panel of *Paxolin sheet* to about the size shown in Fig. 3.2, using a hacksaw.* On this secure a *tag strip*, as shown, and drill a hole to mount a miniature or small-size 500 pF *variable capacitor*.

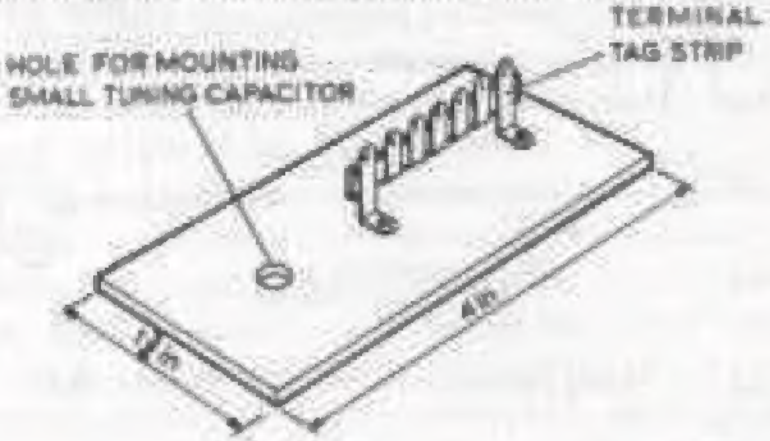

Fig. 3.2 Paxolin panel and tag strip for crystal set circuits.

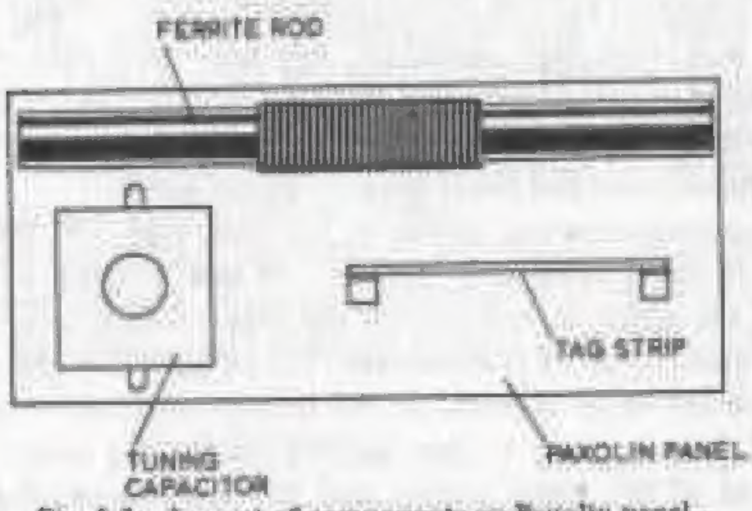

Fig. 3.3 Layout of components on Paxolin panel.

The aerial coil is then mounted on the panel as shown in Fig. 3.3, gluing the coil on to the Paxolin with two or three dabs of sealing wax, or some other suitable adhesive. *Note:* the ferrite rod must be free to slide in the paper tube for 'tuning' adjustments.

Virtually any miniature germanium or silicon diode will be suitable for the detector. Recommended types, which are readily available, are 1N34 and 1N914.

Earphones must be of *high-impedance* type, which need not be expensive to buy, and the higher the impedance the better the reception.

* A phenolic or fiberglass sheet may also be used

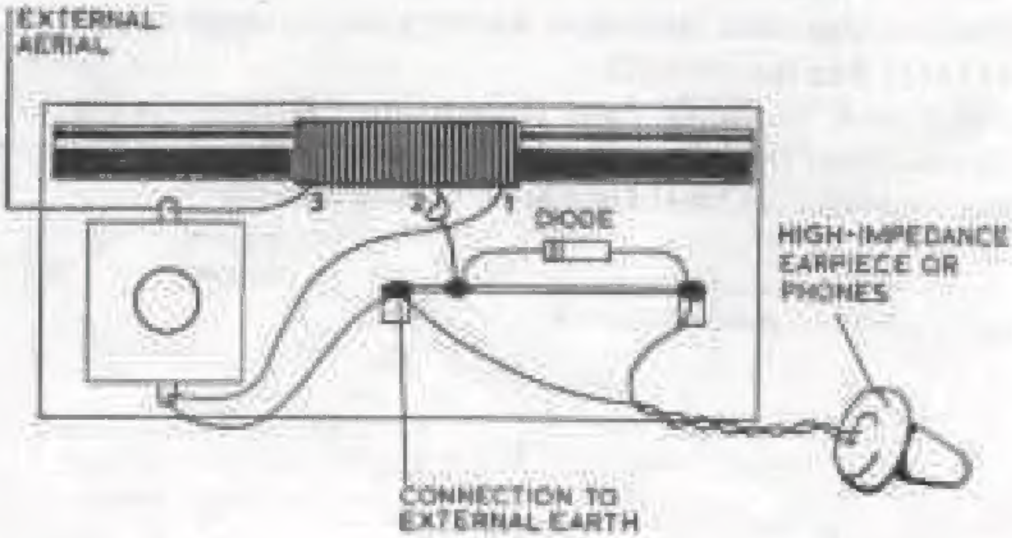

Fig. 3.4 Wiring connections to complete the crystal set.

Alternatively a deaf-aid type earpiece can be used; this will not give the same volume or quality of reproduction as headphones, but is a less expensive component. This should preferably be of the *high-impedance magnetic* type, with high sensitivity. Any high-impedance earpiece will suffice, but if of crystal type will require a resistor, connected across it, to complete the circuit. This will reduce the amount of current flowing through the earpiece and lower the strength of signal.

Wiring connections are shown in Fig. 3.4. End 3 of the aerial coil (the end of the 50-turn coil) connects to one terminal of the tuning capacitor, the aerial or 'hot' end of the tuned circuit, and the point to which an external aerial is connected. The other end of the coil (end 1) connects to the other terminal of the tuning capacitor, from which an additional wire is taken to the first tag on the tag strip. This is the 'earthy' end of the tuned circuit, and the point to which an external earth is connected. Leave plenty of slack wire between the coil and tuning capacitor.

The other connections are then as follows:

(i) Tapping point of the coil wire bared and connected to the second tag.
(ii) The diode also soldered to this same tag, and to any other free tag.
(iii) Headphone (or earpiece) leads to the 'earthing' tag, and to the 'free' tag to which the above diode has been connected. All connections should be made with *soldered* joints.

The wiring-up can be checked against the *circuit diagram* shown in Fig. 3.5 (ignoring the components shown with broken lines). The set should now be 'working'.

In areas of strong signal strength, no external aerial or earth connections should be necessary. Performance will, however, be improved in any area by attaching an aerial wire (which can be any thin wire, e.g. using the same wire as for the coil winding), of up to 160 feet. The longer the aerial the better the reception, provided it is led away from the receiver to as *high* a point as possible.

An earth connection may further improve aerial performance; by this we mean a connection to some conductor positively in contact with the ground (preferably buried), an excellent example being a metal water-pipe. Thus, if an earth connection is found to be necessary (or you want to try one to see how performance is affected), connect a wire from the 'earthing' tag on the receiver to a convenient water-pipe.

This question of obtaining a *good* aerial and earth is a most important one in areas of poor signal strength. Linking up to a television aerial is often a good plan, since TV aerials are also usually mounted as high as possible. If bare wire is used, it is also important that the upper (free) end of the aerial is not made fast to something which could produce an earth connection (e.g. a damp tree), or at least is suitably insulated from such a support. String is not an efficient insulator; that, too, can conduct when wet.

Quite good results are often obtained by using the springs of a bed as an aerial, in which case an earth connection is usually not necessary. Sometimes, too, when other attempts to yield a good signal strength in

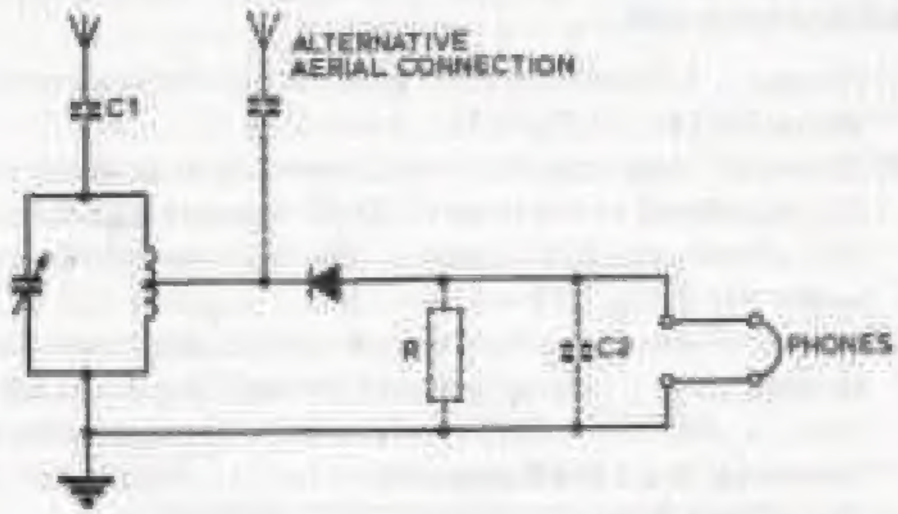

Fig. 3.5 *Circuit 1.* Circuit diagram of basic crystal set.

the aerial have failed, connecting the *aerial* side of the tuning coil to a *good earth* (a water-pipe) can produce better results, the normal earth connection being left off.

Tuning

The receiver is adjusted as follows. Turn the tuning capacitor to fully close the vanes, then open about half a turn on the spindle or knob. (If you are using a trimmer as a tuning capacitor, screw right down and then open half a turn.)

The tuning coil should now be slid up and down the ferrite rod (the coil leads were left a fairly long time to give the necessary freedom of movement) until BBC Radio 3 is heard.*

It may be necessary to slightly alter the adjustment of the variable condenser to tune in to this programme. Also, because of the ferrite-rod aerial the set will be directional, that is, the signal strength received will depend to some extent on the direction in which the aerial rod is pointing, so position the set to pick up the maximum volume.

Having established the best position of the tuning coil on the rod to receive BBC Radio 3, fix permanently with a dab of sealing wax. You should then find it possible to tune in to further stations by altering the setting of the variable capacitor—e.g. typically Radio 4 in about the middle of the capacitor travel and Radio 1 towards the other end.

Any reception you get will almost certainly be very weak and (unless you live close to a broadcast station) you can really feel satisfied if you get any station at all at audible strength. But it is surprising how, sometimes, even quite distant stations can be heard. Also you can often improve the reception and listening strength by quite simple modifications. Try these in order:

(i) Connect a 1,000-pF capacitor across the headphone (earpiece) connections (C2 in Fig. 3.5).

(ii) Instead of connecting the external aerial directly to the tuned circuit, connect one lead to a 220-pF capacitor, and the other end of the capacitor circuit to the 'hot' end of the tuned circuit (C1 in Fig. 3.5).

(iii) Instead of connecting the external aerial to the tuned circuit, connect to the tapping point of the coil (tag to which the diode is also connected). Try a direct connection, and also connecting in a 220-pF capacitor.

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* Tune to an AM broadcast station near the lower end of the dial—close to 550 kHz.

(iv) Try connecting a 1.2-k resistor (or higher value) across the phone connection (R in Fig. 3.5). You may be using the wrong type of phones or earpiece, which do not provide a proper load or complete the circuit.

If there is a complete lack of response, check for faulty wiring-up. A more likely cause, however, is lack of an external aerial or earth connection in an area where these are strictly necessary for adequate reception; or an inefficient aerial (too short) or poor earth connection (bad electrical contact to a good earth point, or connection to a bad earth point).

Another possible cause of apparent failure may be too much outside noise entering the ear so that it is impossible to detect the very weak radio signal as it is being tuned in. Headphones are better than a single deaf-aid type of earpiece in this respect but, in any case, a really quiet room is virtually essential for initial setting up and tuning adjustments. Also, if your adjustment of the tuning control is too coarse, you may completely miss the setting for the station you are looking for, without realizing it.

Reception will also tend to vary with weather conditions. Some days it may be so poor that what was normally a strong station is hardly heard at all. The simple basic receiver has many limitations but, since it costs very little to construct and nothing at all to operate, this must be regarded as inevitable.

Providing you can hear something–even if too weak a signal to distinguish properly–you can certainly improve the performance of your basic set by further experimentation with tuned circuits (see Chapter 4) and/or the addition of amplification to the circuit. You can also try other types of basic crystal set, as described in the following projects.

Circuit 2 (Fig. 3.6) is identical to *Circuit 1* except that, instead of a diode, a transistor is used as a detector. Only two of the transistor leads are connected–the emitter (*e*) connection to the tapping part of the coil, and the base (*b*) to the 'earthy' end of the circuit. The collector lead of the transistor is ignored (bend it out of the way so that it cannot accidentally short out the other leads).

You can try almost any type of low-cost AF transistor; recommended types are OC42 2N370, 2N2925, 2N5088.

With the addition of two more components, Circuit 2 can be modified to work the transistor both as a detector and an amplifier, to give stronger signals through the headphones. Using the same transistor type

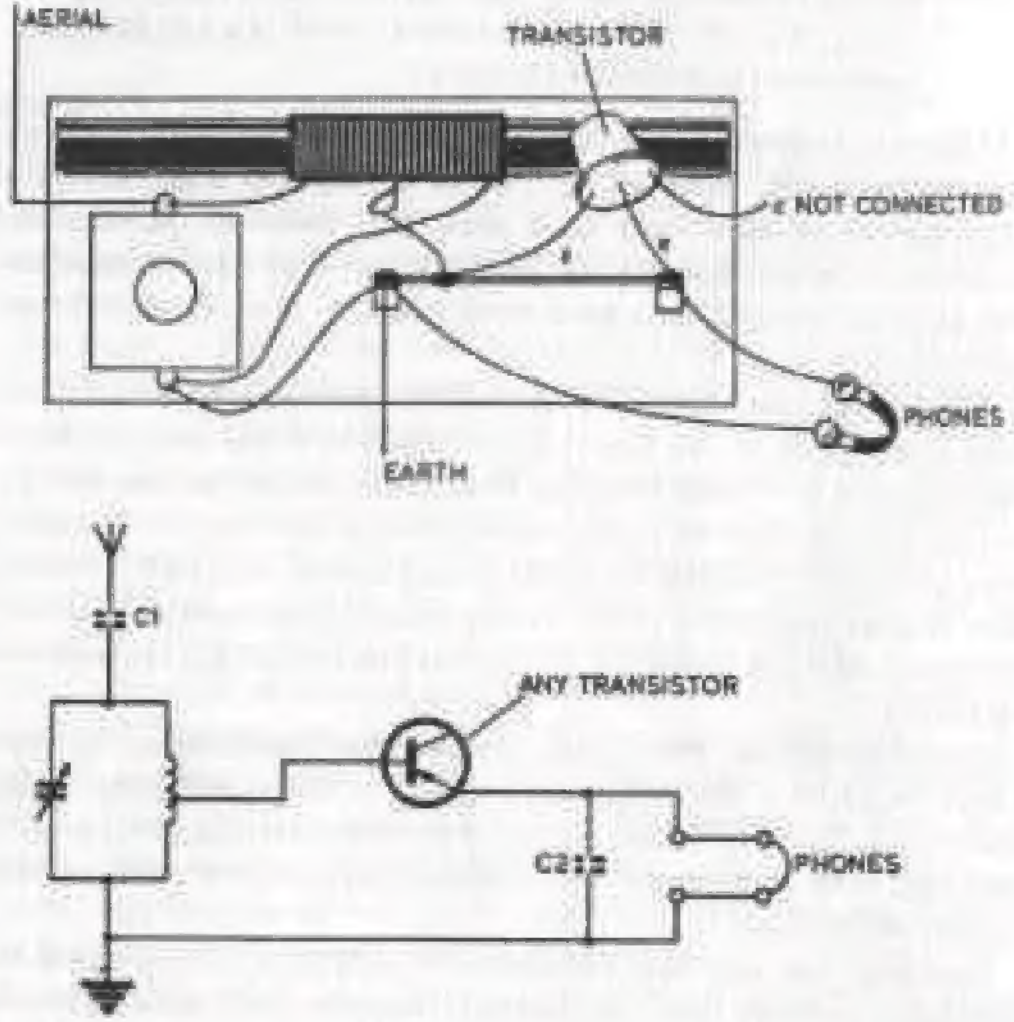

Fig. 3.6 *Circuit 2.* Crystal set using transistor instead of a diode.

as above (or near-equivalent) resistor R should be 15 k and capacitor C3 1 μF or higher.

This time a battery is also required to supply power for the transistor to work as an amplifier. This can be from 1.5 V up to 9 V. Remember the rules for polarity of connection: those shown in Fig. 3.7 are for a p-n-p transistor; an n-p-n transistor would need the battery connected the opposite way round. Battery polarity also affects the connections of capacitor C3 (if an electrolytic or polarized type).

Experiment further by trying the effect of using additional capacitors in the circuit, e.g. C1, 220 pF; C2, 0.001 μF (try other values as well); C4, 0.001 μF (try other values as well).

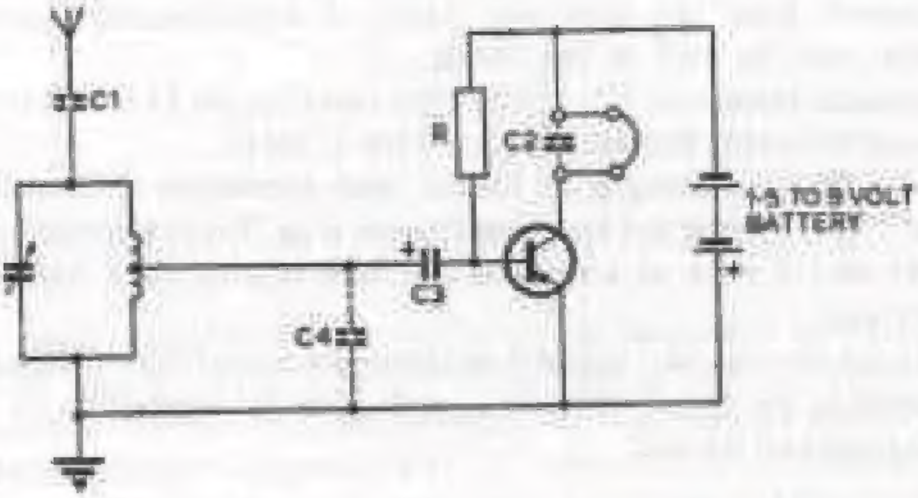

Fig. 3.7 *Circuit 3.* Crystal set with amplification.

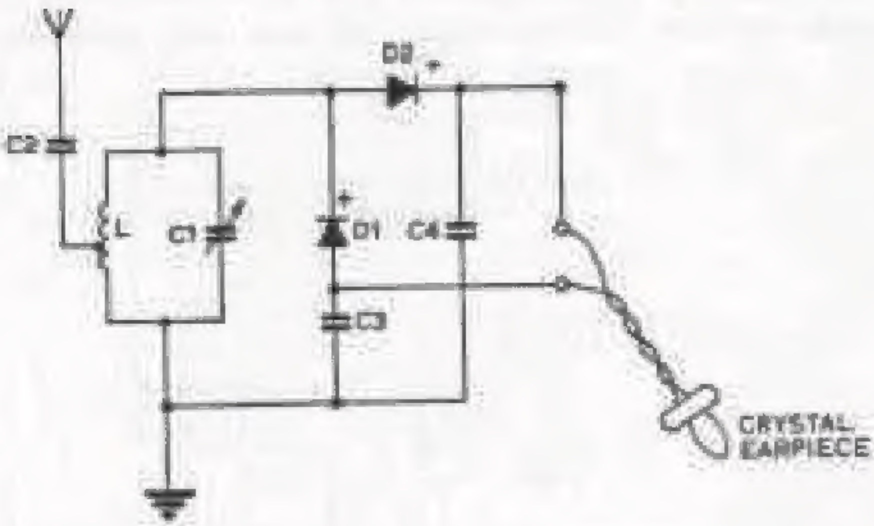

Fig. 3.8 *Circuit 4.* Double diode crystal set.

This circuit incorporates 'voltage doubling' to improve the signal volume and should give better performance than a single diode circuit. L and C1 are the usual tuned circuit, but an unusual feature is that the *aerial* is connected to the coil tapping point. Any type of germanium diodes can be used (they should preferably be the same), making sure to connect them the right way round. A high-impedance *crystal* earpiece must be used in this circuit.

Capacitor values are: C2, 220 pF (this capacitor can be omitted—try with and without in the circuit); C3 and C4, 1,000 pF.

The optimum tapping point for the aerial connection to the coil L is best found by trial and error (see Chapter 4 on 'Tuned Circuits'), but the set should work at a nominal one-third tapping point from the 'earthy' end.

This set can also be tried with conventional tuned-circuit coupling—i.e. aerial to the top of the coil L, and diode D2 connection to the tapping point on the coil.